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ABSTRACT

This document describes an opinion survey of students who had taken one or more online courses from a Michigan community college in the previous year. A random sample of 399 students received a questionnaire; telephone interviews were also conducted. Findings include: (1) 79% of students said their educational goal in taking the online course was to satisfy requirements for a degree program, while 15% enrolled for personal enrichment and 13% to improve job skills; (2) 34% cited flexibility of hours as the primary reason for taking a course online; (3) 24% said the online course was more difficult than expected; (4) 91% said there was adequate opportunity to interact online with the instructor; (5) 85% completed their latest online course and 5% were in the process of completing it; (6) 79% planned to enroll in another online course; (7) 87% said it was very important that online course credits transfer to another college or university; and (8) 64% believed students should pay about the same amount of tuition for an online course as for a traditional course. Detailed responses to all questions, as well as demographics of the student sample, are included. (EMH)

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M. Wahl

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF ONLINE STUDENTS TOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE ONLINE LEARNING

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An Opinion Survey
of Community College Online Students
Sponsored by the
Michigan Community College Association

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April, 2002

TC020628

Conducted by

School Public Relations Consultant Services
Lansing and Williamston, Michigan

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METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY

An opinion survey of students who have taken one or more online courses from a Michigan community college in the past year was conducted by School Public Relations Consultant Services of Lansing and Williamston, Michigan, between April 15 and 24, 2002.

The sampling framework divided Michigan's community colleges into three major clusters: Urban, Suburban and Regional.

Urban community colleges included: C.S. Mott, Delta, Kalamazoo, and Lansing (4).

Suburban community colleges included: Jackson, Kellogg, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, Schoolcraft and Washtenaw (7).

Regional community colleges included: Alpena, Bay de Noc, Glen Oaks, Kirtland, Mid Michigan, Monroe, Montcalm, North Central, Northwestern Michigan and West Shore (10).

Seven community colleges were not included in the poll, either because they were unable to supply the names of online students within the framework of the time line, or because they had no online students.

The sample size of 399 was selected by systematic random sampling procedures and was stratified equally by Urban (n = 133), Suburban (n = 133) and Regional (n = 133) community colleges, and within each of these major subgroups by the percent of online students in each of the community colleges in the cluster. It was chosen to maintain a 95% sampling confidence, with an overall sampling error tolerance of +/- 5%. This means there is a 95% certainty that the range of opinions of respondents in the sampling reflects the same range of responses obtained if all of the voters on the list were called in the same time period; assuming the same interviewers and the same questionnaire; with a sampling error factor of + or - 5%. Sampling error tolerances for the various subgroups in the total sample are larger, due to the smaller sizes of these subgroups.

The questionnaire was developed by Kathy Feaster, a principal of the firm, following input from the Michigan Community College Association Virtual Learning Collaborative staff.

Telephone interviews were conducted by interviewers from Marmen Computing, Inc., of Menominee, Michigan, who were trained in the use of the questionnaire by Mrs. Feaster. Most of the interviewing was accomplished between the hours of 5:00 and 9:00 p.m., although some interviews were conducted during the daytime hours by call-back appointment.

All survey data was read and coded by SPR Consultant Services staff and was tabulated through the computer facilities of Marmen Computing, Inc. Results were analyzed and interpreted by Mrs. Feaster, who prepared this report.

Survey results are reported by question for all respondents and by Urban, Suburban and Regional subgroups.

Statistically significant differences of opinion occur between and/or among these three subgroups when the difference in responses to a particular question is 11% or greater.

Other demographic information is shown in the composition of the survey sample, at the end of this report.

All figures shown in this report are in percentages, rounded to the nearest whole number. When columns do not total 100% it is due to rounding. When columns greatly exceed 100% it is due to multiple responses.

When columns are headed by "__ % of" and ended with "UNASKED" this means it is a follow-up question and only those who responded in a certain way to the prior question were asked this particular question. All percentages shown in these kinds of charts are percent of the whole, not percent of those who were asked the question.

It should also be noted that, when categories such as "certain policies/procedures" or "certain benefits of online classes" are listed in a chart, these are combined responses due to the fact that less than 1% cited any one of the individual responses included in the category.

The successful completion of this project is credited to the cooperation of the state's community colleges, and to Michael Wahl, Executive Director of the MCCA Virtual Learning Collaborative.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

STUDENTS' PRIMARY EDUCATIONAL GOAL WHEN TAKING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE

- Eight of ten students who were enrolled in an online course from a Michigan community college during the past year say their educational goal was to satisfy requirements for a degree program (79%), for personal enrichment (15%) and/or to improve their job skills (13%).

- The major reasons for taking their latest course online rather than in a traditional classroom setting were:

  *It fit their schedule - flexibility of hours (34%)

  *They work full time, are too busy and have no time to go to classes (17%)

  *Personal and/or health related reasons (14%)

  *They could set their own pace and study when they had the time (11%)

  *The college is too far away - too far to travel (11%)

- Although they offer a variety of reasons for enrolling in their online course, most of them connected to the convenience of online courses, more than seven of ten (74%) would have taken the course in a traditional classroom if it had not been available online. Two of ten (23%) would not have enrolled in the course if it was only offered in a traditional classroom setting.

STUDENTS' INFORMATION SOURCES ABOUT ONLINE COURSES

- Students' major sources of information about their online courses were community college publications - cited by seven of ten (69%). Other primary sources were academic advisors at the college (9%) and the college website (9%).

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - REGISTRATION

- The vast majority of students (92%) say it was very easy to register for their last online course.

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

- Online students see both advantages and disadvantages in taking online courses, but the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

  Leading the list of advantages:

  *The online class fit their schedule - it was flexible and they could access it at any time (45%)

  *They were able to work at their own pace and study when they had the time (41%)

  *They did not have to travel and be at the college (12%)

  The major disadvantages listed:

  *Not enough direct interaction and one-on-one with the instructor (14%)

  *Hard to reach the instructor with questions - either it took too long or questions weren't answered at all (12%)

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

- More than two of ten (24%) say their online course was more difficult than they expected. For more than six of ten (65%), however, the level of difficulty was about what they expected, while for another one of ten (11%) it was less difficult than they expected.

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - ADEQUATE INTERACTION WITH INSTRUCTOR/OTHER STUDENTS

- The vast majority (91%) had adequate opportunity to interact online with the instructor. Only nine percent say this was not the case.

- And, the vast majority (88%) also had adequate opportunity to interact online with other students who were taking the class, while one of ten (12%) say this was not the case.

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - ONLINE SUPPORT SERVICES

- Nearly three of ten students (26%) used the online library resources, one of ten (11%) used the online bookstore, and 4% used online tutoring for their class.

- Two of ten (19%) say these support services were more available then they thought they would be when they decided to take the course, four of ten (39%) say they were as available as they expected them to be, and 7% say they were less available than expected. Three of ten (28%), however, didn't know these support services were available for their online class.

COMPLETION RATE FOR ONLINE COURSES

- The vast majority have either completed their latest online course (85%) or are in the process of completing it (5%). One of ten (10%) failed to complete their latest online course.

- Nine of ten who completed their course say they learned as much as they expected to learn in the course.

- Seven of ten who completed their course think they learned as much as they would have if they took the course in a traditioinal classroom setting, while two of ten say this is not the case.

PLANS TO ENROLL IN ADDITIONAL ONLINE COURSES

- Eight out of ten students (79%) plan to enroll in another online course in the future, while 3% are already taking another online course. One of ten (8%) won't enroll in another online course, while the other one of ten (11%) are undecided.

- Leading the list of subject areas of interest to urban community college students:

  *Computer Science (16%)

  for suburban community college students:

  *Business courses (16%)

  and for regional community college students:

  *English (10%)

- When choosing a college to take an online course from, the vast majority (87%) say it's very important that the credits transfer to another college or university.

- Six of ten (61%) say that the accreditation of the college is very important.

- Six of ten (58%) also say the reputation of the college is very important.

- And, the majority (52%) say the cost of tuition for the online course is very important.

TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM LEARNING VERSUS ONLINE LEARNING

- Six of ten (57%) say that, in general, online courses are about the same as traditional classroom courses. One of ten (13%) feel that they're better than traditional courses, and another one of ten (14%) say they're not as good as traditional courses.

- More than six of ten (65%) believe that when it comes to transferring online courses to a four-year institution they would have the same value as traditional courses, while 3% feel they have more value and 4% that they have less value.

- And, six of ten (60%) believe that employers consider online courses to have the same value as traditional classroom courses, while one of ten (11%) think employers place more value on online courses and another one of ten (7%) believe employers consider online courses to be less valuable.

TUITION FOR ONLINE COURSES

- Six of ten (64%) believe students should pay about the same amount of tuition for an online course as they would pay for a traditional classroom course. Another three of ten (29%) believe students should pay less tuition for an online course, and 5% believe that students should pay more tuition for an online course than they would for a traditional classroom course.

STUDENTS' PRIMARY
EDUCATIONAL GOAL WHEN TAKING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE

Students who were enrolled in an online course from a Michigan community college during the past year were asked:

> *Let's talk about the last online course you took from a Michigan community college . . . What was your goal when you took that online class - did you take it to satisfy requirements for a degree program, or to improve your job skills, or was it for personal enrichment, or for some other reason?*

and they offered several reasons. For eight of ten students (79%) their goal was to satisfy requirements for a degree program, for fifteen percent it was for personal enrichment and for one of ten (13%) it was to improve their job skills.

REASONS FOR ENROLLING IN ONLINE COURSE	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
To satisfy requirements for degree program	79%	81%	79%	76%
Personal enrichment	15	11	16	20
Improve job skills	13	14	13	12
Some other reason①	2	2	-	4

(Multiple response question)

①Some other reason: for homework in a computer class I was taking; wanted the credits; to gain college credits while I was in high school; to get a taste of college; to learn how to study so when I go to college I'll be prepared

The leading reasons students took their last course online, rather than in a traditional classroom setting were:

*It fit their schedule - flexibility of hours (34%)

*They work full time, are too busy and have no time to go to classes (17%)

*Personal and/or health related reasons (14%)

*They could stay at home or at work and take the class (14%)

*They could set their own pace and study when they had the time (11%)

*The college is too far away - too far to travel (11%)

Tell me - why did you take this course online

rather than in a traditional classroom setting?

REASONS FOR ENROLLING IN ONLINE RATHER THAN TRADITIONAL	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Fit in my schedule/flexibility of hours	34%	41%	33%	28%
Work full time/too busy/no time to go to classes	17	20	19	15
Personal/health related reasons	14	15	14	14
Could stay at home/work and take the class	14	10	14	18
Could set my own pace/study when there was time	11	14	10	10
College too far away/too far to travel	11	9	8	17
Class only offered online	5	3	4	8
Traditional class was full/ only class available	3	2	2	5
Wanted to try online classes/ new experience	3	2	5	1
Certain benefits of online classes①	3	2	2	3
Was still in high school	1	2	-	2
Didn't realize it was online when I registered for it	1	-	2	2
Miscellaneous reasons②	2	-	5	2

(Multiple response question)

①Certain benefits of online classes: online takes eight weeks to complete and in a class it's sixteen weeks; the format of the class; quicker; less expensive in the long run; hate wasting time in a classroom with students who aren't prepared; because there are no lectures online; can get answers to questions faster; so I didn't have to deal with the teacher

②Miscellaneous reasons: to break it up; love working on the computer; heard it was easier than a regular course; it was a requirement; like online courses

And, although they offered a variety of reasons for enrolling in their last online course, most of them connected to the convenience of online courses, more than seven of ten students (74%) said they would have taken the course in a traditional classroom if it had not been available online.

Two of ten (23%), however, would not have enrolled in the course if it was only offered in a traditional classroom setting.

Would you have taken this course in a traditional classroom, if it had not been available online?

ENROLL IN TRADITIONAL IF NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Yes, would have taken it anyway	74%	68%	79%	76%
No, would not have taken it	23	32	17	20
Don't know/undecided	3	-	4	5

STUDENTS' INFORMATION SOURCES ABOUT ONLINE COURSES

Students' major sources of information about their online courses were community college publications - cited by seven of ten (69%).

Other primary sources were academic advisors at the college (9%) and the college website (9%).

How did you find out about this online course - where did you get your information about it?

INFORMATION SOURCES FOR ONLINE COURSES	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Community college publications	69%	73%	68%	67%
Academic advisors/counselors at the college	9	9	9	10
College Website	9	11	8	9
Word-of-mouth from friends/ acquaintances (non-college related)	5	2	8	6
Classmates	4	4	5	3
Called/asked at the college	3	2	4	2
Instructors at the college	2	1	2	5
Radio/television	2	3	2	2
My employer	2	1	2	2
High school counselors/teachers	2	2	-	3
Internet search engines	1	-	2	1
Work at the college	1	1	1	-
Financial aid advisors at the college	-	1	-	-
Other sources①	1	2	-	2
Can't say/don't recall	1	1	1	-

(Multiple response question)

①Other sources: college orientation; student services; distance learning

office; attended conferences; father works with online classes at a community college

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - REGISTRATION

The vast majority of students (92%) say that it was very easy to register for their last online course. Only seven percent say it was somewhat easy, while 1% say it was not too easy and another 1% that it was not at all easy to register for the course.

How easy was it to register for this course - would you say it was very easy, somewhat easy, not too or not at all easy?

REGISTRATION FOR ONLINE COURSE	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Very easy	92%	93%	93%	90%
Somewhat easy	7	7	6	8
Not too easy	1	1	1	1
Not at all easy	1	-	-	2

Reasons offered by those who say it was either - not too - (1%) or - not at all easy - (1%) to register for their online course: -had to get a guest registration from another college, and it took a long time before they faxed it, and then had to drive to the college-; -when I first got the courage to register they were very unfriendly-; -went to get a signature for something, then had to go to another building, and by the time I got there the class was closed-; -just kept going in circles and now I'm on academic probation-; -if you have to show up at the campus to register it's inconvenient-; and -the code for my class was wrong and they had a lot of problems trying to get the correct one-.

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Online students see both advantages in taking online courses as well as disadvantages, but the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. Nearly all of the students (98%) offer at least one advantage, while 63% voice a disadvantage.

First, students were asked:

> *Tell me - what did you like about taking this class online - what were the benefits?*

Leading the list of advantages, which underlined their reasons for taking the class:

*The online class fit their schedule - it was flexible and they could access it at any time (45%)

*They were able to work at their own pace and study when they had the time (41%)

*They did not have to travel and be at the college (12%)

ADVANTAGES OF ONLINE LEARNING	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Fit my schedule/flexible/ access any time	45%	47%	40%	47%
Able to work at own pace/study when there was time	41	41	42	39
Did not have to travel/be at the college	12	11	8	17
Personal benefits①	5	8	4	3
Interaction with other students/ online discussions	2	2	4	2
Certain policies/procedures②	2	2	3	1
Able to contact teachers/ always available	1	-	2	2
Nothing/no advantages	2	3	2	2
Miscellaneous advantages③	2	2	2	2
Can't say/don't know	-	-	1	-

(Multiple response question)

①Personal benefits: improved my writing schedule; learned how to take a course online; felt more comfortable during online discussions than face to face; able to attend a college course with my disability; really had to study and pay attention; didn't have to pay for parking; got a feel for Internet; got to do work in my pajamas; saved money; could take care of my child

②Certain policies/procedures: wasn't busy work - just did assignments; more class oriented; could get notes online; got credits for my credentials; no lectures; if you do bad on a test you can retake it

③Miscellaneous advantages: it's easy learning and the teachers are great; easier than a regular course; like teaching myself; it's new technology; like working on the computer; it's not applicable because I had to go to school and attend classes with other students

Then they were asked:

And, what didn't you like about it?

The major disadvantages listed:

*Not enough direct interaction and one-on-one with the instructor (14%)

*Hard to reach the instructor with questions - either it took too long or questions weren't answered at all (12%)

while more than three of ten (35%) say there was nothing they disliked about their online course and 2% couldn't think of anything they disliked about it.

DISADVANTAGES OF ONLINE LEARNING	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Nothing/no disadvantages	35%	35%	37%	34%
Not enough direct interaction/ one-on-one with instructor	14	15	14	14
Hard to reach instructor with questions/took too long/ questions weren't answered	12	14	7	17
Problems with instructor/ teaching methods①	9	11	11	7
Technical problems	8	7	6	11
Harder than expected/too much work/hard to keep up	6	3	7	8
No socialization/don't meet your classmates	5	5	5	7
Differences between online and traditional②	5	4	6	4
Had to be self-motivated/ self-disciplined	3	3	3	3
Problems with tests/testing③	3	4	3	1
Problems with college provider④	2	1	4	2
You teach yourself	1	2	-	2
Miscellaneous criticism⑤	2	2	3	1
Can't say/don't know	2	3	2	1

(Multiple response question)

①Problems with instructor/teaching methods: some classes were hard to understand; instructor didn't use website – couldn't check grades; it felt a little "canned" – could have bought a book and read it; you had to have a certain number of hours you worked for each course; feedback on assignments very slow; very dissatisfied with professor; required to do online discussion; some professors have a review and some don't; instructor very strict; unclear assignments; not structured; one of the math classes made it hard to do – if you had a problem you would have to

call and make an appointment; sometimes wondered if teacher got homework or not; had to go to the college with my questions; instructor used too much of an educated vocabulary; professor not active enough; had to go to chat rooms to ask questions; had to check in seven days a week, even Sundays; you had to do a lot of postings on the blackboard site, so you had to be there a lot; bad instructor; had an old format; didn't understand notes

②Differences between online and traditional: different kind of setting than I was used to; coordination for group project was very difficult; no written material to read from; being in a regular class gets you out and there are discussions; it was a science class and I had to do lots of labs by myself; no lectures; no chalkboard to see things done; miss out on extra lectures; a lot of classmates wouldn't communicate when we were doing projects; needed lab work and it wasn't available; you can't talk to anyone – should have mandatory meetings every week or two for every one of the students; hard to get to other students

③Problems with tests/testing: had to go to the college to take the tests; test times are too early; driving to take the test; if you got something wrong on the test you couldn't go back and fix it; quizzes were done in too short an amount of time

④Problems with college provider: lack of variety in the online courses available; they only have a limited number of students who can take the class; had to go far to get the books; we had to take five courses and they didn't space them out so we had to take one after another; didn't get my registration code until four or five weeks after my class started and I got behind; was not able to access the information because of misinformation from the college

⑤Miscellaneous criticism: it's hard to start an online class unless you have had some experience; not a good way to study literature; did not have everything I needed available to me at home; had to figure out the blackboard and many other things myself so I fell behind and failed; it's hard to get back to the same course because you lose your password; it would have been OK, if I didn't have a full schedule of classes already; it cost more

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

More than two of ten students (24%) say their latest online course was more difficult than they expected - and this was voiced significantly more by students from suburban community colleges (30% more difficult) than it was by those from regional colleges (18% more difficult).

For more than six of ten (65%), however, the level of difficulty was about what they expected, while another one of ten (11%) say it was less difficult than they expected.

Was the class more difficult than you expected, about what you expected, or less difficult than you expected?

DIFFICULTY OF ONLINE COURSE	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
More difficult than expected	24%	23%	30%	18%
About what was expected	65	64	59	71
Less difficult than expected	11	14	10	11
Undecided	1	-	2	-

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - ADEQUATE INTERACTION WITH INSTRUCTOR/OTHER STUDENTS

The vast majority of online students (91%) say they had adequate opportunity to interact online with the instructor of their latest online course. Only nine percent say this was not the case, and list a variety of reasons for this feeling.

And, the vast majority (88%) also feel they had adequate opportunity to interact online with other students who were taking the class, while one of ten (12%) say this was not the case.

Did you have adequate opportunity to interact online with the instructor of the class?

ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERACTION WITH INSTRUCTOR	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Yes, had adequate opportunity	91%	90%	88%	93%
No, did not	9	10	11	5
Can't say/don't recall	1	-	1	2

REASONS FOR INADEQUATE INTERACTION WITH INSTRUCTOR	9% of All Resp.	10% of Urban	11% of Sub-urban	5% of Regional
Instructor rarely/never available/hard to get/ would not get back to me	4%	4%	5%	3%
Took several days to get a reply	2	1	3	1
Hours of student/instructor conflicted	1	2	1	1
Not offered	1	1	1	1
No need/never tried	1	-	2	-
Other reasons①	1	2	-	-
Can't say/don't know	1	1	1	-
(UNASKED)	(91)	(90)	(89)	(95)

(Multiple response question)

①Other reasons: instructor did not post much on the board; didn't have any chat rooms set up, so the only way to contact was email; always asked questions but instructor chose ones below me and passed me by

And, did you have adequate opportunity to interact online with other students who were taking the class?

ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERACTION WITH OTHER STUDENTS	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Yes, had adequate opportunity	88%	85%	90%	88%
No, did not	12	14	10	12
Can't say/don't recall	-	1	-	-

REASONS FOR INADEQUATE INTERACTION WITH OTHER STUDENTS	12% of All Resp.	14% of Urban	10% of Sub-urban	12% of Regional
No need/didn't try/not an online interaction class	4%	4%	2%	5%
No set chat room time/when I was online other students weren't	3	3	5	1
Not set up/not available/no way to contact them	3	3	2	3
Problems communicating with other students①	2	3	2	1
Other reasons②	1	2	-	2
(UNASKED)	(88)	(86)	(90)	(88)

(Multiple response question)

①Problems communicating with other students: took awhile for communications to get back and forth; didn't know how to get ahold of them; couldn't locate email addresses; no response during time I took the class; too time consuming to do it on a regular basis; there was a time when all students could go on, but no one did

②Other reasons: I was in the classroom with the students; was just a discussion board that you could post ideas on; message board very formal so few people used it; talked mostly with the instructor; didn't know anyone in the class

CRITIQUING THEIR LATEST ONLINE COURSE - ONLINE SUPPORT SERVICES

When students were asked about their use of three specific support services for online classes - online library resources, the online bookstore and online tutoring - nearly three of ten (26%) said they had used the library resources, one of ten (11%) that they had used the online bookstore, and only 4% that they had used online tutoring for the class.

> *Now let's talk about the college's support services for online classes . . . When you took your online class did you use the (online library resources) (online bookstore) (online tutoring)?*

ONLINE LIBRARY RESOURCES	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Yes, used them	26%	23%	29%	28%
No, did not	70	72	67	71
Unaware of their availability	4	5	4	2

ONLINE BOOKSTORE	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Yes, used it	11%	11%	9%	11%
No, did not	86	83	87	87
Not available	1	1	-	1
Unaware of its availability	3	5	4	1

ONLINE TUTORING	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Yes, used it	4%	7%	2%	3%
No, did not	91	86	93	94
Not available	1	2	2	-
Unaware of its availability	4	6	3	3

But when they were asked:

> *Would you say these support services were more available, about what you thought, or less available than you thought they would be when you decided to take the course?*

two of ten (19%) said that these support services were more available than they thought they would be when they decided to take the course, while four of ten (39%) said they were as available as they expected them to be, and only 7% that they were less available than expected.

Three of ten online students (28%), however, didn't know these support services were available for their online class.

ONLINE SUPPORT SERVICES	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
More available than expected	19%	20%	23%	14%
About what I thought	39	35	33	49
Less available than expected	7	8	7	5
Didn't know they were available	28	29	30	24
Undecided	7	7	7	8

COMPLETION RATE FOR ONLINE COURSES

The vast majority of students have either completed their latest online course (85%) or are still taking the course and are in the process of completing it (5%). Only one of ten (10%) failed to complete their latest online course.

And, did you complete this online course?

COMPLETED ONLINE COURSE	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Yes, completed course	85%	88%	84%	83%
Still in the process/ still taking the course	5	4	2	8
No, did not	10	8	14	9

WHY NOT COMPLETE ONLINE COURSE	10% of All Resp.	8% of Urban	14% of Sub-urban	9% of Regional
Personal/health related problems	4%	3%	4%	4%
Time constraints/too busy	3	3	5	-
Fell behind/too difficult	2	3	2	2
Bored/lost interest/not self-disciplined enough	2	1	5	1
Problems with instructor①	1	1	1	2
Need certain benefits of traditional classroom②	1	-	-	2
Other reasons③	-	-	1	-
(UNASKED)	(90)	(92)	(86)	(91)

(Multiple response question)

①Problems with instructor: didn't know how to do some stuff and professor didn't feel it was his job to help me, so I dropped out; we had gone past mid term and I had not gotten any feedback on my work - it was a writing class and no feedback makes the class pointless; got nothing out of it and it was a pain

②Need certain benefits of traditional classroom: needed to see things done on a chalkboard; more difficult to interact with instructor online than in a classroom

③Other reasons: withdrew from the course; dropped it because I couldn't afford it

Nine of ten students who completed their latest online course say

they learned as much as they expected to learn in the course.

And, seven of ten who completed their course think they learned as much as they would have if they took the course in a traditional classroom setting, while two of ten say this is not the case.

Did you learn as much as you expected to learn in the course?

LEARN AS MUCH AS ANTICIPATED	85% of All Resp.	88% of Urban	84% of Sub-urban	83% of Regional
Yes, learned as much as anticipated	78%	79%	77%	79%
No, did not	6	9	6	4
Undecided	-	-	1	-
(UNASKED)	(15)	(12)	(16)	(17)

WHY NOT LEARN AS MUCH AS ANTICIPATED	6% of All Resp.	9% of Urban	6% of Sub-urban	4% of Regional
Lack of interaction with instructor/little or no feedback	2%	4%	2%	1%
Problems with course itself①	2	2	3	2
Poor instructor	2	2	2	-
Traditional classroom benefits not available	1	2	2	1
Other reasons②	1	2	-	1
(UNASKED)	(94)	(91)	(94)	(96)

(Multiple response question)

①Problems with course itself: learned the same thing that I learned from a previous class so the course was back dated; the course glossed over things and didn't go into detail; it was too confusing; all tests were on the computer so I could have used my book; book and class did not match well, and the testing "sucked"; course was disorganized; was displeased with book being used

②Other reasons: harder to remember everything without hearing a voice; only needed to do the minimum; found I couldn't remember from just reading it

And, do you think you learned as much as you would have if you took it in a traditional classroom?

LEARNED AS MUCH AS IN A TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM	85% of All Resp.	88% of Urban	84% of Sub-urban	83% of Regional
Yes, learned as much as in a traditional classroom	63%	61%	63%	66%
No, did not	18	26	16	13
Undecided	3	2	5	4
(UNASKED)	(15)	(12)	(16)	(17)

WHY NOT LEARN AS MUCH AS IN A TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM	18% of All Resp.	26% of Urban	16% of Sub-urban	13% of Regional
Lack of interaction with instructor	7%	12%	4%	5%
No interaction with other students	4	5	4	2
Too difficult/impossible to get questions answered online	3	7	1	1
Learn more from lectures/ there were no lectures	2	5	-	2
Need more self-discipline/ motivated more in traditional classroom	2	2	2	2
Some courses don't lend themselves to online①	2	2	2	2
Learned more than I would have in traditional classroom	2	1	3	1
Particular benefits of traditional classroom not available online②	1	2	1	1
Certain policies/procedures③	1	-	2	1
Can learn more in classroom setting	1	-	2	2
Other reasons④	1	1	1	-
(UNASKED)	(82)	(74)	(84)	(87)

(Multiple response question)

①Some courses don't lend themselves to online: it was a foreign language class, so hearing it would have helped more; math was too difficult to take online; due to visual conceptions of math, it's more conclusive in a traditional classroom; this class is just easier to take in a classroom setting

②Particular benefits of traditional classrooms not available online: would have learned more if instructor showed examples in class; no handouts; would have been more discussion; need hands-on experience of classroom

③Certain policies/procedures: don't think as much was covered; instructor went too fast; did not get any feedback; all tests were open book; had less work by doing it on computer

④Other reasons: depends on the instructor; they aren't teaching you, you are teaching yourself; couldn't follow along with course very easily; better instructors in classroom

PLANS TO ENROLL IN ADDITIONAL ONLINE COURSES

Eight out of ten online students (79%) - 84% of the students from urban community colleges, 73% from suburban community colleges and 81% from regional community colleges - plan to enroll in another online course in the future, while 3% are already taking another online course. Only one of ten (8%) say they won't enroll in another online course, while the other one of ten (11%) are undecided.

Leading the list of subject areas of interest for future online courses for urban community college students:

*Computer Science (16%)

for suburban community college students:

*Business courses (16%)

and for regional community college students:

*English (10%)

Do you think you'll take another course online in the future?

ENROLL IN ANOTHER ONLINE COURSE IN THE FUTURE	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Yes, will enroll in another online course in the future	79%	84%	73%	81%
Already taking another online course	3	2	5	2
No, will not	8	8	9	7
Undecided	11	7	14	11

WHY NOT ENROLL IN ANOTHER ONLINE COURSE	8% of All Resp.	8% of Urban	9% of Sub-urban	7% of Regional
Bad experience with instructor/too many problems	2%	2%	2%	2%
Need interaction with instructor/questions answered sooner	2	2	1	2
Classes I need not offered online	2	2	2	2
Not self-disciplined/motivated enough for online courses	1	1	3	-
Already completed educational goal/no need	1	1	2	2
Learn better in traditional classroom	1	1	1	2
Other reasons①	1	1	1	-
(UNASKED)	(92)	(92)	(91)	(93)

(Multiple response question)

①Other reasons: don't feel I got my money's worth; transferring to a four-year college

SUBJECT AREA FOR FUTURE ONLINE COURSE	82% of All Resp.	86% of Urban	78% of Sub-urban	83% of Regional
Business	10%	5%	16%	9%
Computer Science	9	16	8	3
English	7	5	6	10
Math	6	9	4	5
Science/medical/health related①	4	8	5	2
Psychology	4	6	2	4
Accounting	3	3	5	2
Writing	3	6	1	1
Economics	3	2	3	2
Teacher education	3	3	1	4
Social Studies	2	1	2	3
History	2	1	2	3
Government/Political Science	2	2	2	1
Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement	2	2	-	2
Other Computer related classes②	5	7	3	4
Other Business related classes③	5	5	5	3
Other Language Arts classes④	3	2	4	2
Other Math related classes⑤	1	2	1	2
Other specific classes⑥	1	1	2	1
Miscellaneous comments⑦	2	1	2	3
Can't say/undecided	18	19	11	24
(UNASKED)	(18)	(14)	(22)	(17)

(Multiple response question)

①Science/medical/health related: medical; science; sports medicine; nursing; human biology; lifelong wellness; nutrition; biology; anatomy; physics

②Other Computer related classes: web design; photo shop art; information systems; CIS; networking; programming; data base access

③Other Business related classes: human resources; marketing; administrative assistant; construction management; transcription; management; construction law; paralegal

④Other Language Arts classes: creative writing; communications; world literature; humanities; liberal arts; speech

⑤Other Math related classes: intermediate algebra; math for elementary teachers; algebra; statistics

⑥Other specific classes: art; genealogy; physical education; engineering

⑦Miscellaneous comments: anything except English or math; whatever I need to finish my degree; anything towards a bachelor's degree; will take an online course if it's the only way the class is available

Then they were asked about the importance of four particular considerations in their selection of a provider for online courses:

> *If you were going to enroll in another online course - and you were choosing a college to take it from - how important would . . .*
>
> *The accreditation of the college be when you were making your choice*
>
> *The reputation of the college*
>
> *That the credits transfer to another college or university*
>
> *The cost of tuition for the online course*
>
> *- very important somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?*

All of the four areas questioned were considered to be very important to the majority of online students.

The vast majority of students say it's very important that:

*The credits transfer to another college or university (87%)

while six of ten say:

*The accreditation of the college is very important (61%)

*The reputation of the college is very important (58%)

and the majority say:

*The cost of tuition for the online course is very important (52%)

TRANSFERABILITY OF CREDITS	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Very important	87%	83%	89%	88%
Somewhat important	8	12	5	8
Not too important	3	4	4	2
Not at all important	1	2	2	1
Undecided	1	-	2	2

ACCREDITATION	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Very important	61%	64%	66%	53%
Somewhat important	29	27	25	34
Not too important	7	8	5	8
Not at all important	2	1	2	4
Undecided	2	1	2	2

It should be noted that students from suburban and urban community colleges place significantly more importance on the accreditation of the college offering the online course than students from regional community colleges (66% and 64% versus 53%).

REPUTATION OF THE COLLEGE	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Very important	58%	61%	57%	55%
Somewhat important	34	30	34	38
Not too important	6	9	5	3
Not at all important	2	-	3	3
Undecided	1	-	1	2

COST OF TUITION	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Very important	52%	62%	47%	47%
Somewhat important	36	29	37	42
Not too important	9	7	12	7
Not at all important	1	2	2	1
Undecided	2	1	2	3

It should also be noted that students from urban community colleges place significantly more importance on the cost of tuition for the online course (62% -very important-) than either students from suburban or regional community colleges (47% -very important-).

TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM LEARNING VERSUS ONLINE LEARNING

Six of ten students (57%) say that, in general, online courses are about the same as traditional classroom courses. One of ten (13%), however, feel that they're better than traditional courses, while another one of ten (14%) say they're not as good.

Students were asked:

> *Let's change the subject now and talk about online courses in general. Would you say that, in general, online courses are better, about the same, or not as good as traditional classroom courses?*

ONLINE COURSES	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Better than traditional courses	13%	10%	16%	13%
About the same	57	60	53	59
Not as good as traditional courses	14	10	12	19
Depends on the course	15	18	19	8
Undecided	2	2	1	2

Reasons offered by those who feel online courses are better than traditional classroom courses (13%):

WHY ONLINE COURSES ARE BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL	13% of All Resp.	10% of Urban	16% of Sub-urban	13% of Regional
More convenient/fit my schedule	6%	5%	8%	3%
Able to work at my own pace	5	4	8	5
Need to be disciplined/work harder	4	4	5	4
Able to work at home/don't have to travel	3	2	3	4
More interaction with other students	1	2	1	2
Other benefits①	2	2	1	2
(UNASKED)	(87)	(90)	(84)	(87)

(Multiple response question)

①Other benefits: better price; course was open to my own interpretation; don't get lost in the subject as easily; a lot of content and you can go through the textbook; more writing and communication based instead of test taking; don't have to deal with anyone who's faster or slower or stupid; you don't miss taking the notes if the teacher talks too fast

And, reasons offered by those who feel online courses are not as good as traditional classrooms courses (14%):

WHY ONLINE COURSES ARE NOT AS GOOD AS TRADITIONAL COURSES	14% of All Resp.	10% of Urban	12% of Sub-urban	19% of Regional
Not enough interaction/one-on-one with instructor	11%	9%	11%	12%
Too hard to get questions answered online	4	1	3	8
Up to you to learn/more on your own	4	2	2	9
Other benefits not available①	3	2	4	4
Miscellaneous reasons②	1	-	1	1
(UNASKED)	(86)	(90)	(88)	(81)

(Multiple response question)

①Other benefits not available: no socialization; you can hear other people's opinions in a traditional classroom; you have lectures and notes to follow, and more discussions; can't do lab work online; you miss out on lots of information

②Miscellaneous reasons: hard to catch up once you fall behind; it's only "not as good" if you don't have any experience in the subject area; didn't learn what I should have because the instructor was rude and he did a poor job keeping everything updated

Then they were asked:

> *What about the value of online courses - when it comes to transferring online courses to a four-year college or university, would you say that online courses are more valuable, about the same, or less valuable than traditional classroom courses?*

More than six of ten (65%) believe that, when it comes to transferring online courses to a four-year institution, online courses have about the same value as traditional courses, while 3% feel they have more value and 4% that they have less value.

VALUE OF ONLINE COURSES TO A FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
More valuable than traditional courses	3%	2%	5%	3%
About the same value	65	68	63	64
Less valuable than traditional courses	4	2	4	6
Depends on the course	2	2	4	1
Don't know/undecided	26	26	25	26

Reasons offered for the impression that online courses are less valuable to four-year institutions than traditional courses (4%) include: "colleges believe you learn more from traditional classroom courses" (2%); "online courses are not transferable" (1%); "they don't like the idea of online courses"; "they don't know if you did the work or if someone else did it for you"; "all the classes I've seen aren't for credit – they're for continuing education" (1%).

And, six of ten students (60%) believe that employers consider online courses to have the same value as traditional classroom courses, while one of ten (11%) think employers place more value on online courses than traditional courses and another one of ten (7%) believe employers consider online courses to be less valuable.

And, when it comes to interviewing for a job would you say that employers consider online courses to be more valuable, about the same, or less valuable than traditional classroom courses?

VALUE OF ONLINE COURSES TO EMPLOYERS	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
More valuable than traditional courses	11%	12%	8%	12%
About the same value	60	58	65	57
Less valuable than traditional courses	7	7	6	8
Depends on the course	3	5	1	3
Don't know/undecided	20	19	20	20

Reasons offered for the impression that online courses are less valuable to employers than traditional courses (7%) include: "employers think online classes are easier and require less commitment" (3%), "it's too new – they don't see the benefits yet" (2%), and "they believe the person has less experience with social interaction and communication skills" (2%).

TUITION FOR ONLINE COURSES

One final question was asked of students in the community college online learning survey project:

Should students expect to pay more tuition, about the same amount or less tuition for an online course than for a traditional classroom course?

Six of ten (64%) believe that students should expect to pay about the same amount of tuition for an online course as they would pay for a traditional classroom course, and this is true of students in all subgroups.

Another three of ten (29%) believe that students should pay less tuition for an online course than for a traditional course, and offer a variety of reasons for this belief.

Only five percent of the students believe that students should pay more tuition for an online course than they would pay for a traditional classroom course.

TUITION FOR ONLINE COURSES	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional

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More than for a traditional course	5%	3%	6%	6%
About the same amount	64	64	62	66
Less than for a traditional course	29	32	29	26
Depends on the course	1	-	1	2
Don't know/undecided	1	1	2	-

Reasons offered by those who say students should expect to pay more for online courses than for traditional courses (5%) include: "because of all the technology and equipment needed by the college (2%); "online courses cost the college more" (2%); "the instructor does more work and spends more time on the class" (2%); and "it takes more personnel to keep the course running" (1%).

And, reasons offered by those who say students should expect to pay less tuition (29%):

WHY EXPECT TO PAY LESS FOR ONLINE COURSES	29% of All Resp.	32% of Urban	29% of Sub-urban	26% of Regional
Not using classroom space/ school facilities/parking	8%	13%	8%	5%
No instructor present in the classroom	6	6	7	6
Instructors do less work	6	6	6	6
Instructor doesn't teach you/ you teach yourself	6	5	5	7
Less overhead/don't use college services/resources/handouts	6	7	5	5
Less/no interaction with instructor	5	5	5	7
Students provide their own materials/equipment	4	5	5	2
Benefits are less/don't learn as much	1	-	2	2
Other reasons①	1	2	1	2
(UNASKED)	(71)	(68)	(71)	(74)

(Multiple response question)

①Other reasons: not as many classes offered; ability to have more students in the class should keep costs lower; because they're 'canned' - the college has no part in setting up the course; if they offer more online courses they won't need as many buildings as they do now

COMPOSITION OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE

(95% Confidence Level
+/- 5% Sample Error)

N = 399

Number of Online Courses Taken

	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
One course	39%	29%	44%	43%
Two courses	25	29	17	29
Three courses	13	13	14	12
Four or more courses	23	29	24	17

Gender of Respondents

	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Female	74%	79%	68%	75%
Male	26	21	32	25

Age of Respondents

	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
14 through 17 years old	1%	2%	-%	1%
18 through 24 years old	39	36	38	42
25 through 34 years old	28	26	28	29
35 through 44 years old	19	16	20	23
45 through 54 years old	11	17	11	5
55 through 64 years old	2	3	2	1
65 years old and over	-	-	1	-
Declined to respond	1	1	2	-

COMPOSITION OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE (cont.)

Occupation of Respondents

	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Clerical	28%	28%	27%	30%
Full-time student	16	14	10	23
Technical	11	14	14	5
Service worker	9	13	6	8
Executive/professional/manager	7	8	9	4
Homemaker	7	8	6	6
Operator/fabricator/laborer	5	4	6	5
Skilled craftsman	5	2	5	7
Education	4	3	6	2
Sales	3	2	4	4
Disabled/unemployed	2	2	4	1
Self-employed/business owner	2	-	2	2
Government/public official/ police/fire	1	1	1	2
Retired	-	1	-	-
Declined to respond	1	1	1	1

Status of Employment

	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Employed full-time	52%	55%	58%	44%
Employed part-time	22	20	20	25
Not employed	25	24	20	30
Unknown/declined to respond	1	1	2	1

Education Level of Respondents

	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Still attending high school	3%	5%	1%	5%
High school graduate	14	13	11	20
Attended vocational/technical school	2	2	2	3
Some college/community college classes	50	53	53	45
Graduated from community college	21	18	21	25
Four-year college graduate	6	7	8	3
Post-graduate work	1	1	1	-
Master's degree	2	2	4	-
Declined to respond	-	-	1	-

COMPOSITION OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE (cont.)

Household Income

	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Less than $5,000	1%	1%	1%	1%
$5,000 to $10,000	3	4	-	4
$11,000 to $20,000	7	9	5	7
$21,000 to $30,000	13	10	9	20
$31,000 to $45,000	15	19	10	17
$46,000 to $60,000	19	17	21	20
More than $60,000	26	25	37	15
Declined to respond	17	17	18	17

Access to Internet at Home

ACCESS TO INTERNET AT HOME	All Resp.	Urban	Sub-urban	Regional
Yes, access at home	98%	98%	100%	97%
No, not at home	2	2	-	3

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ONLINE STUDENT
SAMPLE SELECTION CHART

	NUMBER OF ONLINE STUDENTS	% OF SUBGROUP
URBAN:		
C. S. Mott	470	17%
Delta	574	21
Kalamazoo Valley	125	5
Lansing	1,542	57
TOTAL:	2,711	100%
SUBURBAN:		
Kellogg	411	16%
Macomb	607	23
Oakland	275	10
St. Clair	257	10
Schoolcraft	747	28
Washtenaw	356	13
TOTAL:	2,653	100%
REGIONAL:		
Alpena	103	3%
Bay de Noc	590	20
Glen Oaks	98	3
Kirtland	109	4
Mid-Michigan	455	15
Monroe	225	7
Montcalm	191	6
North Central	91	3
Northwestern	923	30
West Shore	270	9
TOTAL:	3,055	100%

TOTAL IN UNIVERSE: 8,419

CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

Methodology of the Study i

Summary of Findings iii

Students' Primary Educational Goal
When Taking Their Latest Online Course 1

Students' Information
Sources About Online Courses 3

Critiquing Their Latest
Online Course - Registration 4

Critiquing Their Latest
Online Course - Advantages and Disadvantages 4

Critiquing Their Latest
Online Course - Level of Difficulty 7

Critiquing Their Latest Online Course -
Adequate Interaction with Instructor/Other Students 8

Critiquing Their Latest
Online Course - Online Support Services 10

Completion Rate for Online Courses 12

Plans to Enroll
In Additional Online Courses 15

Traditional Classroom
Learning Versus Online Learning 19

Tuition for Online Courses 22

Composition of the Survey Sample 24

Sample Selection Chart 27

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